

Remarks/Arguments

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that the references listed in the Information Disclosure Statements dated October 1, 2001 and October 5, 2001 have been considered.

Claims 1-21 are currently pending in the application. No amendment of the claims has been made. Claims 1, 11 and 17 are independent claims.

Claims 1-21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Pusic (U.S. Pat. No. 5,025,386). This rejection is respectfully traversed for the reasons set forth below.

Prior to addressing the instant rejection, a brief description of the inventive concept is considered warranted.

Postal and carrier systems have traditionally addressed the need to determine and monitor the status of a shipped mail piece by offering premium "track & trace" services. These traditional track and trace services assign a unique carrier generated number to each mail item which is used to track the mailpiece through the carrier distribution system. Confirmation of final delivery of the mail item is accomplished by either providing the sender with a physical document containing information about delivery or alternatively allowing the sender to access a web site of the service provider where the unique carrier generated number can be found if the mail item has been delivered. Additionally, inquiries regarding mail item tracking status are checked via the unique carrier assigned number.

The instant inventors observed that in an office building environment where mail is generated by individual office workers, and sent to a mailroom for final processing, office workers have to rely on the mailroom to obtain premium services for mail items such as proof of deliver, etc. That is, the function of the mail room is to collect mail items created by office workers, finish the mail items by applying postage thereon and submit the mail items to postal operators (or other carrier) for processing and delivery. Mail rooms are typically equipped with mailing machines, postage meters, scales and other equipment for mechanization of such finishing work. Conventional mailing machines are capable of automatic feeding, sealing and metering of mixed mail items.

Currently there is no effective way of processing value added services mail items (mail that is accounted for such as proof of deposit, receipt, or delivery – also referred to previously as premium service mail items) through a mailing machine. Thus, these premium service mail items have to be created and processed in essentially a manual way. Accordingly, what is needed is a system and method that allows office workers to obtain track and trace and/or confirmation of special services delivery of a mail item in a more automated manner than the prior art systems.

The instant inventors solved the above problem wherein the worker applies a first special service indicator to the mail item during creation of the mail item and forwards the mail item to a mail room for final processing prior to submitting the mail item to the carrier for the special service delivery. At the mailroom, the first special service indicator is automatically detected and a second special service indicator is

applied to the mail item, the second special service indicator including an identification of the special service delivery required and a unique identifier including an electronic address of a company server. The mail piece is then submitted to the carrier for the special service delivery. Information relating to the location of the mail item is then sent to the electronic address obtained by the carrier from the unique identifier on the mail item and this information can be stored on the company server. The office worker is then provided access to the company server to obtain the information relating to the location of the mail item.

Pusic does not disclose, teach or suggest any of the elements claimed in the independent claims and has absolutely no relation to the above concepts, as recited in the claims of this application.

In particular, Pusic does not disclose, teach or suggest the claimed application of a special service indicator, or first and second special service indicators, to the mail item during the creation of the mail item (independent claims 1 and 11, respectively), or the means for detecting a special service indicator (independent claims 17). As noted in the Specification. Beginning at page 17 and with reference to Figs. 6-8, a special services sticker (SSS) 201 is applied to mail item 102. SSS 201 is used to identify mail item 102 as requiring a special service. In this example, the SSS is distinguishable based on color codes. For example, different colors are associated with different special services such as proof of deposit, proof of delivery, and proof of receipt.

Special services are clearly distinguished from other information which can be placed on mail item 102 such as digital postage marks, stamps, postnet barcodes, etc. Once a mailing machine detects and interprets the SSS 201, it prints a special label which, continuing with this example at pages 18-19 of the Specification, contains server 107 URL and a unique serial number (SN) assigned by the mailing machine.

From the above, it is clear that SSS 201 (which corresponds to the recited special service indicator) does not, in any way, take the form of Pusic's zip code, as suggested by the Examiner. A zip code has no relation to any special service or special service indicator, as recited in claim 1, 11 and 17. As such, Pusic fails to disclose, teach or suggest the recited special service indicator, first or second special service indicators or the detection of the same, as recited in the above-referenced independent claims.

Turning to the remaining elements of independent claims 1, 11 and 17, Pusic fails to disclose, teach or suggest sending the mail item to a mail room for final processing prior to submitting the mail item to the carrier for the special service delivery. The Examiner's citation to Pusic at col. 3, lines 44-45 merely refers to a Telex machine and has no relation whatsoever with a mail item or a mail room.

Similarly, Pusic fails to disclose, teach or suggest automatically detecting at the mail room the special service indicator on the mail item and determining the special service delivery required based on the detection of the special service indicator. The Examiner's citation to Pusic at col. 2, lines 32-34 merely refers to

sorting by a zip code and has no relation whatsoever with detecting a special service indicator on a mail item, a mail room or determining the required special service.

Again, Pusic fails to disclose, teach or suggest applying at the mail room a unique identifier to the mail item, the unique identifier including an electronic address of a company server. The Examiner's citation to Pusic at col. 2, lines 37-40 merely refers to a printed bar code which indicates a zip code and has no relation whatsoever with applying a unique identifier which includes an electronic address of a company server. The disclosed zip/bar code is in no way equivalent to, or even similar to, a server's electronic address.

Pusic also fails to disclose, teach or suggest submitting the mail item with the unique identifier thereon to the carrier for the special service delivery. The Examiner's citation to Pusic's Fig. 3 merely refers to "the left side view of the machine." (col. 4, 36-41). There is simply no relation whatsoever between Pusic's "machine" and submitting a mail item with unique identifier to a carrier, or, for that matter, any form of special service delivery.

Continuing on, Pusic also fails to disclose, teach or suggest receiving from the carrier at the electronic address obtained by the carrier from the unique identifier on the mail item information relating to the location of the mail item. The Examiner's citation to Pusic at col. 10, lines 58-59 (which is in the body of Pusic's claim 1) merely refers to receiving means for receiving a mailed item and data entry means for entering data related to the mailed item. There is simply no relation whatsoever

between these recited means in Pusic's claim 1 and receiving at the electronic address, information from the carrier regarding the location of the mail item.

As a final matter, and so as not to belabor the point, Pusic also fails to disclose, teach or suggest storing the information relating to the location of the mail item at the company server, as well as providing the office worker with access to the company server to obtain the information relating to the location of the mail item. The Examiner's citations to Pusic at col. 4, lines 59-60 (which begins at the end of the description of Fig. 8 (a bar code) and ends at the description of Fig. 9 (a bar code)) and col. 8, lines 6-10 (which discusses bar codes), respectively, have no relation whatsoever to storing mail item location information on a server or providing a worker access to that server to obtain that information.

To summarize the above discussion of the Examiner's reliance on Pusic, it must be pointed out that Pusic fails to disclose, teach or suggest every element recited in the independent claims. That is, there is absolutely no support for the Examiner's 102 rejection of these claims.

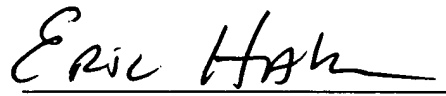
In view of the above it is respectfully submitted that independent claims 1, 11 and 17 are neither anticipated by, nor rendered obvious in view of, Pusic. Additionally claims 2-10, 12-16 and 18-21 are considered patentable based on their respective dependencies from claims 1, 11 and 17 as well as for the specified elements in each of these claims which are neither taught nor suggested by Pusic.

It is submitted that the application stands in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the rejection and an early notice of allowance is earnestly

solicited. If however, the examiner has any additional questions, please contact the undersigned at the number below.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the claims of this application are now in a condition for allowance and favorable action thereon is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Halber", written over a horizontal line.

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